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FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2426
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPF/AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH PRIORITY 0027
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY 1764
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 2615

C O N F I D E N T I A L HO CHI MINH CITY 000365

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
PHNOM PENH PLEASE PASS EAP DAS JOHN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/5/2017
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR PREL VM
SUBJECT: HCMC DISSIDENT LEADER TRAN KHUE INDICTED
REF: A) HANOI 567; B) HCMC 333 AND PREVIOUS; C) HCMC 294 AND PREVIOUS; D) HCMC
248 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: Seth Winnick, Consul General , CONGEN HCMC, State
Department.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) On April 2, we spoke with Tran Khue, Deputy General
Secretary of the Democratic Party of Vietnam (DPV) to arrange a

SIPDIS
meeting for EAP DAS Eric John, implementing Ref A human rights
roadmap. Khue welcomed the chance to meet and made no mention
of any new harassment (unlike other HCMC-based activists- ref
B). On April 3, we informally notified the HCMC External
Relations Office of the planned meeting with Khue (as well as
another meeting with Thich Quang Do, General Secretary of the
Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam). Our ERO contact objected
to the meetings and said that, in any case, we should not meet
with private Vietnamese citizens without providing formal
diplomatic notification and receiving GVN approval. We replied
that, as the meetings were in our recognized consular district,
no formal notification was required and none planned. Our
informal notification was a friendly gesture in line with our
long-standing policy to ensure that our activities are
transparent to GVN.

¶2. (C) Later on April 3, Tran Khue's son contacted us to report
that police were raiding his father's home. Police seized two
computers, a cell phone and some 18 kilos of printed materials.
We spoke with Khue early on April 4. He told us that Ministry
of Public Security Officials read him an indictment charging him
with "propagandizing against the state." This is the same
charge on which Hue-based dissident Father Nguyen Van Ly and
others were convicted last month (ref C). Police did not
indicate when they might return to arrest Khue.

¶3. (C) Tran Khue told us that he suspected that he would be
called for a "working session" with police on April 9 to prevent
him from meeting with DAS John. Khue said he would comply with
the police summons. In a wooden statement seemingly intended
for big brother's monitors on the line, Khue said that he is a
loyal Vietnamese citizen, that he did not write anything that
could be construed as anti-state, but rather was focused on
combating corruption. He added that, unlike Father Ly, his
Party has not called for a boycott of the May National Assembly

elections and that he and his family plan to vote in those elections.

Comment

¶4. (C) In his late 60s, Khue does not appear to be prepared to return to prison. Khue and the DPV are relative moderates. Unlike the Father Ly's 8406 Bloc, Khue accepts a leading role for the Communist Party. However, he continues to advocate for a multi-party system. With the authorities apparently adopting a policy of "zero tolerance" on political dissent, that fact alone makes him a prime target for prosecution and persecution.

¶5. (C) With the indictment issued, Khue can be arrested at any time. As in the case of 8406 bloc leader Do Nam Hai, who resigned from the movement after police threatened his arrest (ref D), the authorities may calculate that the threat alone may be enough to force Khue to curtail his political activities. Unless Khue cancels our meeting, he will expect us to show up for our scheduled meeting at his home on April 9 and we plan to be there.

WINNICK